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Fine money

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Dedication.

TO MY SISTER.

"There 's pansies, that 's for thoughts."

Will you take these little pansies?
They are plucked for you;
Not because I dare to deem them
Rare in scent or hue,—
But because in my own garden
They have chanced to grow;
How or why they came, I know not,—
Whence, I do not know.
Some were plucked in happy moments,
Some with tears were wet;
Breathe whate'er there is of fragrance,
And aught else — forget!

E. E. H.

MILTON, 1895.

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IN MEMORIAM.

W. H. H.

HARK! I hear him singing,
As he used to sing, —
Sweet and glad hosannas
To the Heavenly King.

Voice and heart were ever —
In accordance fine —
Tuned to purest measures,
And to songs divine.

With celestial choirs
His voice mingles now;
And a strange and hallowed
Light is on his brow.

Radiant and white-robed
Do I see him stand,
And his own child-angel
Holds him by the hand.

With new life, new beauty,
With joy heaven-born,
He is sweetly singing,
This bright Sabbath morn!
Night is merged forever
In Eternal Dawn!

ROXBURY, *June* 1, 1873.

S. M. H.

WHERE art thou now? — O thou whose constant presence,
Hath ever blest my life, until to-day!
Whose loving words and looks, like heavenly manna,
Have dropped their nourishment upon my way!

Where art thou now? — This vacancy and silence
Tell me distinctly of thy worth at last;
Like music only known by the vibrations
That thrill our heart-strings when the sound is passed.

Where art thou now? — What realm, what starry mansion,
Hath opened to receive thy spirit bright?

Thou who didst love in reverent devotion
To watch the heavenly splendors of the night?

Where art thou now? — Didst thou with dying daylight
Pass through the western portals far away?
And in the bright apocalypse of sunset
Find the new glories of another day?

Where art thou now? — My spirit reacheth forward
Into the darkness of its night's abyss!
Wilt thou not answer? — Is there no connection
That love can use, when sense is powerless?

Where art thou now? — Still, still the question riseth;
Still I reiterate the plaintive cry;
And strive with finite powers to interpret
The mysteries of earth, and air, and sky.

Where is that Spirit Land? that wondrous
Country?
That Heaven, that hath opened wide for
thee?
While we, — with outstretched arms, and eager
vision, —
"Stand gazing upward," like those "men
of Galilee!"

MILTON, *January* 22, 1893.

PENSÉES.

VOICES ON THE AIR.

ANGEL voices on the air,
When we most are unaware,
Come, like answers to a prayer.

Not alone at some rare time,
When our spirits upward climb
To the mountain heights sublime,

When we feel ourselves to be
Nearer to divinity,
And our thoughts from earth set free,

Like the birds in homeward flight,
Or the flowers to the light,
Strive to reach the Infinite;

Not alone in some sweet mood,
When, in happy solitude,
Everything seems fair and good;

When to us all nature brings
Sweet and tender utterings,
With a rustling of wings;

Not alone at times like these,—
Times of ecstasy or ease,
Or of holiest sympathies,—

But as often when we wear
In our souls some grief or care,
Come these voices on the air!

Lingering, although unsought,
Till our minds from them have caught
Something of diviner thought.

Sometimes in the silence deep,
Of the night-time, while we keep
Nature's sacred tryst with Sleep,—

Then through dreams I feel the sense
Of a brooding influence,
Like a sweet intelligence.

Sometimes in the busy maze,
And along the narrow ways,
Of life's most prosaic phase, —

Something that I do not see,
Something pure and heavenly,
Comes between the world and me.

And upon my heart they fall, —
Voices, very still and small,
Yet distinct as bugle call;

Waking to new consciousness
My dull spirit, where may press
Too much weight of earthliness.

Ever keep, O heart of mine!
One pure space, a sacred shrine,
For the messages divine!

They will surely come to thee,
Trooping in, by two and three, —
A celestial company!

And a peace divine they 'll bring, —
Surely as the seeds of spring
Make the summer's blossoming!

CHIARO-OSCURO.

I ASK not for a quiet sea,
  Over whose smooth expanse
Of undisturbed monotony,
  No billows ever dance.

I ask not for a cloudless sky, —
  A sky forever blue, —
An endless sweep of heavenly
  But never-changing hue.

I ask not for a day so calm
  That there will never be
Some murmur of the breeze, to stir
  The dead tranquillity.

I ask not that the course of life
  Too peacefully should flow;
We cannot know the worth of joy
  Until we taste of woe.

We cannot know how sweet it is
To be beloved, unless
We sometimes feel within our hearts
The pain of loneliness.

It is the sorrow that is born
Of parting, that can bring
The joy of meeting, — and that makes
Our love a living thing.

It is the waves upon the sea —
Not the impassive calm —
Which measure its immensity,
And give to it its charm.

It is the changing clouds which float
Across the summer sky,
Which make it lovelier when they veil
Its blue intensity.

It is the mingled light and shade
Over a lifetime thrown,
Which gives to every happy scene
A beauty of its own ; —

A beauty that it could not have
  Without the shadow too;
'T is only in the night-sky, that
  We see the stars shine through.

So let me have — if have I must —
  Some moments that are sad,
Rather than lose through too much peace
  The power to be glad.

SPIRIT OF MY HAPPY DAYS.

SPIRIT of my happy days!
In my heart will be —
In my heart of hearts — a place
Sacred still to thee!

Thing of beauty and delight,
Let me hold thee still!
Let again thy presence bright
All my being fill!

Let thy sunny influence
Shine upon my way, —
Sending through the gloom most dense
A divinest ray!

For the memory of thee
Is a joy more sweet
Than any fair reality
That I now may meet.

May I never lose thy trace
  Through receding years!
Never seek in vain thy face,
  Through a mist of tears!

But though clouds encompass me,
  And the world grow cold,
May my thoughts still turn to thee,
  Spirit fair of old!

And thou, answering my prayer,
  In my heart wilt seem
Like a living presence there, —
  My *real* life the *dream!*

HAVE STRENGTH.

HAVE strength to *love*, O heart! —
though thou art grieving
No sweet return!
Joy cometh more with giving than receiv
ing, —
As thou wilt learn!

Have strength to *hope*, O heart! — though
where thou strayest,
No light may shine!
That dayspring from on high for which thou
prayest,
May yet be thine!

Have strength to *bear*, O heart! — though
clouds and sorrow
May be thy lot!
For in the glorious, eternal morrow,
'T will matter not!

Have strength to praise, O heart, the mighty Giver! —
Though there may be
Some of Earth's fairest blessings that are ever
Denied to thee!

Have strength to feel, O heart, — though dark the way is, —
The Hand that guides!
'T will lead at last to where the perfect day is, —
Whate'er betides!

TO H. J.

"There 's pansies, that 's for thoughts."

DISTANT Friend! — so I must call you,
Though, alas! I have not seen
You in mortal form, but only
In that mystic time, between
Sleep and waking, I have fancied
What must be your face and mien.

I do not attempt the measure
Of your praises to repeat;
I must leave the theme to others,
Who more ably it can treat;
Yet — I would as your admirer,
Lay this tribute at your feet.

'T is a pansy, — so we 'll call it, —
For a kind and loving thought!
And across the broad blue ocean
Do I send it to you, fraught

With the most delightful wishes
That a pansy ever brought;

And it thanks you, who have given
Me so many pleasant hours.
With earth's fairest things I class you, —
With the sunshine and the flowers;
And your words upon the spirit
Fall like sweet, refreshing showers.

More, I trust, — Oh many more, from
Your enchanted pen may flow!
They are surely *sweetest* pansies,
That around our pathway grow.
I would carry their pure fragrance
With me, wheresoe'er I go!

Will you take this little pansy?
Small, imperfect though it be,
It is the attempted utterance
Of a heart's sincerity, —
Through it pales before the laurels
That upon your brow I see.

April 16, 1879.

UNDEFINED.

UNNUMBERED blessings strew my path,
My cup is running o'er;
Some of life's sweetest gifts are mine;
I *dare* not ask for more.

And yet — within my heart there is
One little empty spot,
Which even in my happiest mood
Is never quite forgot.

It is a longing undefined;
It is not *quite* a thought;
I cannot form it into words,
Though for them I have sought.

It is so very vague a thing,
That even, if some day,
A heavenly messenger should come, —
An angel fair, — to say —

"Child, I will listen to thy prayer,
And grant thee thy request,
If thou wilt tell to me the cause
Of this divine unrest," —

I think that even then I could
Not tell him what to give;
Yet — in my heart, this nameless need,
Distinct, though negative.

THE POET.

O THOU that hast "the vision and
The faculty divine,"
The poet's heart to understand, —
What heritage is thine!

Some may have beauty, honor, gold;
But unto thee is given
A source of happiness untold,
Which lifts thee near to heaven.

Whichever place thy home may be,
A castle, or a cot,
Whether in wealth or penury,
To thee 't will matter not.

No matter if thy friends are few,
And fate is stern to thee;
The good, the beautiful, the true,
Are with thee constantly.

Thou lovest nature's every mood;
And solitude to thee,
(If thou canst call it solitude)
Is sweet society.

The dawning day, the twilight hour,
The starry solemn night,
The whispering breeze, the summer shower,
All fill thee with delight.

And every little bird that sings,
And every flower that blows,
Speaks to thee of divinest things
Only a poet knows.

These are thy friends, — thy spirit's friends, —
And they are true to thee.
A constant joy their presence lends,
Never satiety.

Hold on thy way, O poet heart!
Hold to the pure and true!
Thou hast attained that better part,
Granted but to a few.

And this is the "reward" it brings, —
Thy heaven-born "ideal,"
Thy fitful sweet imaginings, —
These make for thee, the "real."

NOVEMBER.

IT is November! — Sadness deep
Broods over nature. No sweet song
Of bird does to this time belong.
Oh, is this Death, or is it Sleep?

I seek the garden that I loved;
Each flower and leaf is stricken down.
Oh, where is all that beauty flown
That lately my glad eyes approved?

I wander in the woods alone;
The dry leaves rustle 'neath my tread,
And through the branches overhead
The winds pass, with a dreary moan.

My heart takes up the sad refrain,
And grieves, because so much of good,
So much we would keep, if we could,
Is gone, — and will not come again.

TO A FRIEND.

PLAYMATE of childhood's days!
Ever to thee
Memory turns her gaze
Most lovingly.
Then we were children twain,
Trusting and true,
Without a thought of pain,
Life was so new.
We wandered hand in hand,
All the bright hours;
Earth seemed a pleasant land,
Fair were its flowers.

Friend of maturer years!
Still did I find
All the hopes fancy rears
Round thee entwined.
Thou wert my friend and guide,
To thee I turned,

And first by thy dear side
Life's meaning learned.
All my best thoughts I brought,
Thy mind to greet,
There to find what I sought,
Sympathy sweet.

Now, — thou art gone from me!
And nevermore
May I commune with thee
By wood or shore.
Yet in my heart I keep
The ancient love;
Though it be buried deep,
I feel it move.
And in thy distant home
Over the sea,
Where the azaleas bloom,
Think, dear, of me!

THE CHILDHOOD OF THE YEAR.

THRICE welcome, every sight and sound
That doth thy advent tell!
O gentle Spring! O happy Spring!
Beauty ineffable!

If I could make a calendar,
The first of May should be
The birthday of the year, — for then
Is thy nativity.

For then are all things new; a new
Heaven and earth appear;
Nature is born again; thou art
The childhood of the year!

The summer's glory, or the wealth
Of autumn is not thine, —
But yet, thou hast a sweeter grace,
A beauty more divine;

A fairer charm than any that
  Those later times disclose, —
As morning is more fair than noon,
  The rosebud than the rose.

I stand with reverence before
  Thy hidden mysteries;
Thy state of promise seems far more
  Sweet than completion is.

Each fibre of my being owns
  Thy mystic influence;
My heart is full of new-born hope;
  I have a deeper sense

Of life, of nature, and of God, —
  And, with each opening flower,
I feel my heart expand, to hold
  The promptings of the hour.

I love thee all, — thy fragrant air,
  Thy leaves of tender green,
Thy violets — the sweetest flowers
  That ever grow, I ween!

And so thou art my favorite!
And so to thee I bring
This offering of song and praise,
To thee, young lovely Spring!

A SEARCH FOR PEACE.

ANGEL of Peace! — Oh, fold thy shining wings!
Abide with me!
The beauty and the light thy presence brings,
At length I see!

For I have searched, — but searched for thee in vain,
So many years!
Yea, oftentimes with weary heart and brain,
With blinding tears.

I searched amid the worldly joys that youth
Seeks eagerly;
But there, I found at last, that thou, forsooth,
Couldst never be.

I searched in nature, — and in one sweet spot
I found thy trace;

But *only* that, — *there* even, I could not
Behold thy face.

And then I waited, — and I watched and prayed;
But evermore
Thy gracious coming was for me delayed;
My heart was sore.

Therefore I gave up searching for thee then;
It could not be.
I calmly took life's burden up again,
Nor thought of thee.

And so it came to pass, that day by day
I grew more strong,
More patient with life's strait and narrow way;
And before long,

The day came, — when 'round me a light did shine,
So sweet, so pure,

I knew it was — could *only* be — divine,
And I felt sure

That thou wert come. I raised my eyes, —
and oh!
There didst thou stand!
With radiant face over me bending low,
With outstretched hand!

And so I found thee, — then thou cam'st to
me, —
I know not how; —
Cam'st in an hour when least I thought to
see
Such joy; — and now,

Angel of Peace! oh, fold thy shining wings,
Ne'er let us part!
The benediction which thy presence brings
Now fills my heart!

COURAGE.

"True repentance is not a backward-looking despair, but a forward-looking courage, and hopeful endeavor." — REV. DR. PUTNAM.

COURAGE, O heart! — and be not "backward looking!"
Let dull despair no longer with thee stay;
Brood not over thy yesterday's sad failure;
Live in the glad, all-possible To-day!

Waste not thine energies in vain regretting;
But strive thy present duties to fulfill.
The Past is dead; it is beyond recalling;
But we may mould the Future as we will.

And we may profit by each sad experience;
May let each failure be a stepping-stone
To something that is higher, purer, nobler, —
And thus we may be able to atone.

Life is so full of deep and tender meaning,
Such glorious possibilities abound,
That every "hopeful," every true "endeavor,"
With good and grand results *may yet* be crowned.

Now God be thanked that unto us is given,
A new, fresh field of action every day.
Then courage, heart! and be not "backward looking,"
But for new strength of purpose humbly pray.

MOUNTAIN MIST.

DIM and distant seem the mountains,
Barely can they be descried;
Strange portentous clouds they look like,
Yet my soul is satisfied;

For I know that they are waiting
In their majesty and might,
Till the fog-dispelling sunshine
Shall reveal them to my sight.

So a tender blessing often
The dull garb of sorrow wears,
For our narrow-sighted vision
Sees it through a mist of tears.

But I ween in that bright morning
When our tears are wiped away,
And we see things clearly, in the
Light of the Eternal Day, —

Then we shall find grace and beauty
  Where we deemed they could not be;
And our earthly sorrows blended
  In a perfect harmony.

EASTER SONG.

I HEAR angel voices singing!
Wondrous tidings they are bringing!
Strangely sweet their heavenly music, beautiful the words they say!
And my heart is quickly beating,
As I listen to the greeting, —
"Weeping Earth, put off your sadness, Christ the Lord is risen to-day!"

Loving friends come at the dawning
Of the holy Easter morning, —
But the sepulchre is empty, and the stone is rolled away.
To the cry from hearts forsaken,
"Where has my dear Lord been taken?"
Comes the blessed answer, — "Seek not here, for He is risen to-day!"

O grave, thou art not victorious!
Morning cometh, glad and glorious!

The dark clouds of doubt are vanished, faith
is come, with us to stay.
Bring earth's flowers for a token
That the sleep of death is broken,
That we too shall rise immortal, as our
Lord is risen to-day.

Earth this day puts off her sadness,
And all nature feels the gladness!
Every bird of air proclaims it, and each
flower by the way!
The long winter night is over,
Hope's fruition we discover,
And we sing with hosts angelic, — "Christ
the Lord is risen to-day!"

WAITING.

HIDDEN in the marble quarry,
—Prison walls indeed!—
Waiting till some artist spirit
Shall its being heed,
There is many a form of beauty,
Longing to be freed.

There are melodies undreamed of
In the organ's breast;
Depths of pathos, heights of rapture,
Never yet expressed;
Waiting till some hand inspired
Wakes them from their rest.

And the air is full of poems,
Waiting to be sung.

Ofttimes in my heart their mystic
Cadences have rung.
Who is he, so pure, so tender,
That he may their beauty render,
In our mortal tongue?

A REVEILLE.

WAKE, my soul! Enough of slumber!
Dream no more the hours away;—
These bright hours that in the counting
Make our little day.

Fields of action lie before thee,
Beautiful, and grand, and true;
Wilt thou linger by the wayside
With the goal in view?

Wilt thou cease from thine endeavor,
When thy task is *almost done?*
Wilt thou lay aside thine armor,
Ere the battle 's won?

Nay!—but with a will unwearied,
Forward press, no duty shirk!
For too soon the night-time cometh,
When no man can work.

Wake, — and answer then the roll-call!
For the moments will not stay;
In our lifetime's calendar, there
Is but one To-day!

THE NIGHT-BLOOMING CEREUS.

BEAUTIFUL spirit of a flower!
That for an hour,
Comes with ethereal loveliness,
This world to bless, —
We gaze with reverence upon your perfectness.

When other flowers close their eyes,
Then you arise;
And while all Nature seems to sleep,
Your vigils keep;
As if to hide your radiance in shadow deep.

But even darkness could not hold
The tale untold, —
For on the summer evening air,
Your perfume rare,
Rising like incense from your shrine, would guide us there.

Some inspiration of a dream
To me you seem;
That with the dawning of the day
Passes away;
Some pure, celestial visitor, that will not stay.

Like nothing earthly you appear;
Our atmosphere
Cannot sustain a flower so fine;
Too soon you pine;—
But you may bloom in Heaven, perhaps, with life divine!

A NOCTURNE.

'TIS gone, — the sunset's lingering gold,—
And night doth spread
Its shadows sad and manifold:
The day is dead.

The trees look weird against the sky,
And seem to me
To stretch their giant arms on high
Imploringly.

The purple outline of the hills
No more is seen;
There is a deep, dark wall that fills
The space between.

There is no movement of the air;
No sound is heard;
No leafy murmur anywhere;
No voice of bird.

Before some mystic influence,
Nature seems bowed
In silence that is so intense,
My thoughts seem loud.

This strangely solemn hour might
Oppress my soul,
Did I not have an inward light
Serene and whole;

For it is given me to know
A great delight!
And thou art with me, dear, — and so,
It is not night!

TO MY MOTHER ON HER BIRTHDAY.

1804–1886.

WE come with gift, and flower, and song,
Which rightly to this time belong, —
And an innumerable throng
Of prayers, and wishes sweet;
And on this joyous tenth of May,
Our little offerings we lay
At your dear feet.

In the far-distant sunny South,
Where Nature wears perennial youth,
Your flower of life had birth; — in truth
Of this fair month a part.
And you — though joy may oft have slept —
Have ever through life's changes kept
Some Maytime in your heart.

The record saith fourscore and two!
But gently hath time dealt with you,

And when in memory you look through
The vista of past years,
You see across the pathway laid
Much more of sunshine than of shade,
More smiles than tears.

Fourscore and two! — Yet *can* it be?
So little change in you we see,
You wear your years so gracefully,
Your life is still so bright!
With you most truly doth abide
The promise, that "at eventide
It shall be light!"

And so, we do not choose to say
That time hath borne a year away,
But rather, on this happy day
Another year is given!
Another pure and perfect gem
Is added to the diadem
Bestowed by Heaven!

MILTON, *May* 10, 1886.

TO J. G.

JULY 12, 1886.

ON this thy birthday morning, O my friend!
What can I give to thee, of fair or sweet?
To thee, whose life is now so all complete
With the full joys which love and friendship lend,
And blessings manifold which Heaven doth send!
'T is useless to lay flowers at thy feet, —
Thou with a garden full, — and yet 't is meet
That on this day, some word of mine should blend
With the kind wishes others wish for thee;
So from my heart of hearts I ask for thine
Its own desire to infinity; —
And that more summers' suns may o'er thee shine
In happy sequence, and that strength may be
The added blessing from the Hand divine!

NOONDAY WALK IN THE COUNTRY.

A SUMMER noontide! — Bathed in confluent light,
The landscape lies before me, warm and fair.
A dreamy silence broods upon the air,
Almost as perfect as the dead of night, —
And broken only by the humming flight
Of insects in the sun. All objects wear
The calm expression of surcease from care.
No signs of human movement greet my sight, —
The cattle lie and ruminate at will, —
The flowers turn their beauty toward the ground.
All 's motionless, as if the sun stood still, —
As if the world, tired with turning round,
Paused, — and forgot her duty to fulfill.
Such utter rest! Such solitude profound!

THE AFTERGLOW.

SAD the day had been and sunless,
Desolate each sight and sound;
Autumn winds distinctly moaning,
Dead leaves fluttering to the ground;
Earth and sky with one expression, —
That of dreariness profound.

But there came — a sunset glory,
A divinely gold surprise;
Like the door of Heaven seeming
To my dazzled mortal eyes;
Like an infinite desire,
That at last we realize.

Sad the day had been and sunless,
In my heart, — for hope had fled.
Through the valley of the shadow
I believed my pathway led;
And the "colors of my spirit"
Dimmed the daylight overhead.

But through the encircling shadows,
Suddenly I saw — thy face!
Beaming like a star above me,
With its soft, effulgent grace;
Like the beauty of the sunset,
Making luminous the place.

Then, like captive bird from fetter,
Quickly was my heart set free!
Nature wore another aspect,
Beautiful exceedingly!
For my hope, my dream, my longing,
Was at last fulfilled for me!

A MEMORY.

I THOUGHT that it was buried 'neath
the weight of years, —
I thought that it was dead.
But no! — it only slept — and it to-day up-
rears
Its beautiful, prone head,

And gazes at me with those wonderful sad
eyes,
Reproachfully, which say, —
"Thou art less faithful, O my friend, than
I! Arise
To truer life to-day!

"Oh, how couldst thou imagine I was dead,
— I who
Am of thy life a part?
Oh, how couldst thou those vain and fleeting
forms pursue,
Which pressed me from thy heart?"

I listen, — and the floods of wakened thoughts
which come
O'erwhelm me with their might.
The present fades from my inverted gaze, like some
Star in the dawning light.

And in that dawn, in which I wake as from a dream,
One thought — all thoughts above —
Holds precedence within my heart; once more I seem
To live, and breathe, and love.

"Oh, stay, forever stay, dear memory!" — I cry, —
"I hold thee as mine own!
I now can let full willingly the world go by, —
I need but thee alone!"

THE WAYSIDE WORDS.

On a grassy slope, close by the wayside of one of the country roads of Milton, every passer-by during the summer and autumn has observed these words, — cut in the turf, very simply, but with beautiful exactness, — "Jesus Only," — with a cross between.

JESUS Only!" — Like a tender
"In remembrance of me,"
These sweet words have graced the wayside
For all eyes to see.

In their beautiful distinctness,
Even he that ran could read;
Ne'er was flower-garden tended,
With such loving heed.

It was like a benediction,
Coming on them unawares,
With a heart perchance o'erburdened
With its worldly cares.

They were such a sweet reminder
Of redeeming love and grace,
That that rural hillside seemed a
Consecrated place.

They have drawn my footsteps thither,
Many a time in sun or shade;
For I went to feel the blessing
That their presence made.

All the country road seemed fairer,
With its charms of wood and sky,
With its charms of field and flower,
That delight the eye.

And the cottage homes reposing
In that blest retirement,
Seemed illumined with a radiance,
By those letters lent.

And the lives within them surely
Must more gentle be and true,
Waking morning after morning,
With those words in view.

"Jesus Only!"—Though their beauty
I may now no longer see,
Still I feel them—as we feel some
Finished melody.

Some with noble aim and tender,
Have to men evangels taught;
Some perchance have written poems,
Born of purest thought:

But those letters by the wayside
Have as much a power proved;
For a poet's prayer is answered,
If one heart is moved.

So I give thee thanks, unknown one,
For this graceful work of thine;
Be thou high, or be thou humble,
'T was a thought divine!

MILTON, *January*, 1890.

ATTAINMENT.

NOW hath thy presence made
Sunshine where else were shade,
Beauty for ashes laid
Over the land!
And on my lashes wet,
Where there may linger yet
Some trace of past regret,
Lay thy soft hand!

Stretch out thine arms to me,
With thy large sympathy,
So that my heart may be
Beating with thine!
Over my spirit's night
Shed thy reviving light,
Making my pathway bright
With day divine!

TO A. A. J.

FRIEND of childhood! gone before me
To the far mysterious Land,
Where no sound of voice may reach thee,
And no writ of hand!

Latest link of all that bound me
To my childhood's home, which lies
Like a distant star which memory's
Halo sanctifies!

Though I may not miss thy presence,
For so many suns have set
Since our hands have touched in greeting,
Or our eyes have met, —

Yet I will miss very keenly
The sweet interchange of thought
Which through many years our white-winged
Messengers have brought.

And through all the days that may be
In the future, there will be
In my heart one spot forever
Consecrate to thee.

And that spot will hold in keeping —
Like a safe retreat of rest —
Some of childhood's fairest memories,
And its tenderest.

Memories that through life's changes
Keep forever young and bright,
And amid the evening shadows
Carry morning light.

For how close the tie that held us,
Only thou canst understand! —
Friend of childhood, gone before me,
To the far mysterious Land!

July, 1891.

MY HOUR.

IT came so near! — this precious thing, —
I need not tell you what;
A heart, a flower, or a gem, —
For now, it matters not.

It came so near! — this ecstasy, —
If I my hand had stirred,
Or raised an eyelid, or pronounced
The lowest murmured word,

I might have drawn it to myself.
But in that hour supreme, —
That hour for which my soul had longed,
In waking thought and dream, —

That hour which Heaven had granted me
As mine beyond dispute, —
My spirit failed, — and I remained
But motionless and mute.

It came so near! — and then it passed
Forever on its way.
My opportunity is now
A thing of yesterday.

Of yesterday, — or years ago, —
It is the same to me;
That hour is sunk into the past,
So deep and utterly.

O ye, who dream of higher flight
In unrestricted air, —
Pray duly when the hour comes,
For strength divine — to dare!

TO OUR MOTHER,

ON HER EIGHTY-EIGHTH BIRTHDAY, WITH THE PRESENTATION OF A CANE.

YOUTH has beauty for its dower;
Strength and wisdom wait
On maturity's full hour;
But the pomp of state,
And the sceptre-wielding power,
Come with eighty-eight!

So to you we bring this token
Of our love most true;
Of our fealty unbroken,
All the ages through;
Of the vows we erst have spoken
And once more renew!

For a sceptre, strong and steady,
Is this ebon wand!
Wield it, O most gracious lady,
With a gentle hand!
We, your subjects ever ready,
Bow to your command!

MILTON, *May* 10, 1892.

HOW A POEM CAME.

I FELT an influence, pure, divine, unseen,
To me descend, as to mown grass the rain;
And hovering midway, earth and heaven between,
Lift me a little, from my lower plane.

And in that altitude, my spirit caught
A sense of ecstasy, supreme and whole;
Each earth-born longing, and unworthy thought
Fell off, — like Lazarus' cerements, from my soul.

Another atmosphere surrounded me, —
So free I felt, — so infinitely blest;
My loosened spirit seemed in harmony
With all that truest is, and tenderest.

A measured cadence floated on the air —
  Wordless and vague, — and yet distinctly
    felt;
Itself repeating like a voiceless prayer,
  Till deep within my heart it seemed to
    melt.

And presently, — though whence I do not
    know, —
  Beyond my own volition, came a phrase,
And then another, with the cadence, — so,
  To me a poem came — one day of days!

TO A BUTTERFLY.

BUTTERFLY, with wings of gold,
To whose velvet beauty clings
All the sweetness manifold,
Of a hundred blossomings, —

Poising in suspended flight,
Where the fairest flowers be,
Fluttering from left to right,
In a sweet uncertainty, —

Then a fine selection making,
Of the loveliest of all,
And some soft communion taking,
For a resting interval, —

Your resplendent wings with pleasure,
Gently fanning to and fro,
As to mark some fairy measure,
For our human ears too low, —

Sailing brightly through the air,
  Like a sunbeam vivified,
Claiming your ecstatic share
  Of the wondrous summer-tide, —

Tell, oh, tell me what you are,
  Product of the summer hour!
Are you, sweet, a fallen star, —
  Or a risen flower?

MY AMULET.

O RING of gold, with chrysoberyls rare!
Thy mystic circle holds a memory.
Thou art the link that binds two friends to me;
One living still on earth, — one in that fair
And far-away celestial City, where —
As the divine Evangelist did see
In his apocalyptic mystery —
The streets are purest gold beyond compare;
And gates of pearl; and each foundation stone
Of such transcendent brilliancy, that they
Resemble thee; and so I think that thine
Must be a heavenly substance; that I own
In thee an amulet — that o'er my way
Can ever shed an influence benign!

A TRANSFIGURATION.

I FROM my window, at the dawn of day,
Gazed on a world transfigured! Heavenly white,
The snow — o'er earth fresh-fallen through the night, —
Like a pure resurrection garment lay;
And in a sky of opalescent gray,
A morning moon! Through all, a strange sweet light,
Diffusive, without shadow! — 'T was a sight
Too beautiful for pencil to portray,
Or pen interpret, — for it was much more
Than beauty, and beyond analysis.
The essence of a prayer it seemed to me;
That I, in that still hour, bowed before
The apotheosis of Earth, — that this
Mortal had put on immortality!

MILTON, *January* 10, 1893.

THE SOUL'S INQUIRY.

WHAT is life, — I vainly pondered, —
With its dreams, and high intents?
With its spiritual longings,
And its deep abandonments?
What am I in my estate,
One with all, yet separate?

I have asked the murmuring waters, —
I have asked the solemn woods, —
And the stars that hold their vigils
Through the midnight quietudes;
And each bird that sings by day
Its ecstatic roundelay.

But, although my heart stops beating
That the voices may be heard, —

Neither woods, nor murmuring waters,
Shining stars, nor note of bird,
Ever any answers bring
To my human questioning.

While I mused, a seer approached me, —
Radiant eyes, and haloed head,
And a look of peace effulgent;
And unto myself I said, —
"*He* can tell what answers be,
To my soul's inquiry."

So with reverent mien and measure,
I the radiant one addressed; —
"Tell me, prophet, from thy wisdom,
And thy height of peace possessed, —
Thou who conquerest in the strife,
Tell the meaning of my life!"

And to me the seer made answer, —
"Many a restless human heart
Seeks, as thou dost seek, a knowledge
That the world may not impart;

Asks as thou dost, — and the cry
Finds but echo for reply.

"Like a traveler who wanders
Wearily in distant lands,
In pursuit of plant or pebble, —
And returns with empty hands,
Finding at his cottage door
What his life was longing for, —

"So with thee in thy researches; —
Seek not through the earth and sky
For an answer to the mystic
Problem, — 'What and why am I?' —
For that answer unexpressed
Lieth latent in thy breast.

"Veil thine eyes, invert thy vision,
Fold thy hands, — with bated breath,
Listen to the sweet and silent
Teachings that the spirit saith!
Listen with quiescent will,
As to holy oracle!

"Thus — and thus alone — thou learnest
What thy being doth presage,
What its highest human meaning,
What its heavenly heritage.
To thine introspective thought,
Is the word and vision brought."

AN INVOCATION.

O DREAM divine — to which my thoughts aspire
When they are freest, best, and happiest, —
Oh come to me again, with influence blest!
Come with thy pure and pentecostal fire,
And regulate each earthly-born desire
That would oppose the spirit's high behest!
Come like immortal love made manifest,
And draw me up to purer planes and higher! —
'T is possible, in this our low estate,
To feel a blessedness that can assuage
Our vague unrest, and bid all sorrow cease.
For this my longing soul doth supplicate,
To claim by right this blessed heritage, —
The Spirit's fruit, — of "love, and joy, and peace!"

CHRISTMAS.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

AGAIN it comes! This holiest season, bringing
The blessedness of promise verified.
And happy bells throughout the land are ringing
A welcome to the joyous Christmas-tide.

Again we ponder o'er the sacred story,
With its deep pathos, and its joy sublime, —
How Jesus came with "trailing clouds of glory,"
To live on earth, in that far-distant time.

We see a vision of the manger lowly,
Which Mary, the sweet mother, bends above,

While a soft halo, luminous and holy,
Surrounds the wondrous Child like heavenly love.

We see the faithful shepherds, who are keeping —
Throughout the star-lit hours of the night —
Their silent watches while their flocks are sleeping,
Until aroused by the archangel bright,

Who comes, the beautiful evangel bringing,
Of promised blessing which to earth belongs ;
While angel hosts from highest Heaven are singing
That tenderest of all immortal songs. —

Distinct above the murmur of earth's voices,
Rises the cadence of that strain divine, —
As truly now, to hearts that it rejoices,
As when it sounded first in Palestine.

"Peace, peace on earth!" — This is the Christmas greeting, —
The sweetest, and the holiest, and the best!
"Glory to God, good will toward men!" repeating
The highest wish by angel choirs expressed.

When we can understand this heavenly pleasure,
This lovely meaning which the song imparts,
And when our pulses beat to the sweet measure, —
Then we may hold a Christmas in our hearts.

1893.

THE SADDEST THING.

WHAT is the saddest thing on earth? —
Is it the farewell given
To those who fade from human sight
And from our arms' encircling might,
And wing their way to Heaven?

Is it when love has been withdrawn? —
Love which we thought to be
So true in its divine excess,
That we could hold its blessedness
Through life's entirety? —

Though earth's farewells, or love's eclipse,
The loss of all that 's glad,
May take the sunlight from our days, —
There seems to me another phase,
More desolately sad.

'T is when, (O heart of mine! implore
That thou mayst never know
The depth of this superlative,
When living is to *cease* to live,
Life's pulses are so low) —

'T is when, with faith's ideal gone, —
That dayspring from above, —
A heart hath lost its right to be,
With its divine capacity
Of knowing how to love.

This is the saddest thing on earth!
The darkest, loneliest lot
That thought can reach — and Holy Writ
In solemn words affirmeth it —
Is his, that "loveth not."

SALUTING THE FLAG.

MILTON, *April* 27, 1894.

IT was a hero's birthday! — when
The flag was floating high,
In grateful memory of one
Who was "not born to die."

From out the village schoolhouse came
Children, in rank and file,
Who 'round the green enclosure marched
In military style.

And then about the flag they paused, —
A semicircle bright —
Child faces, beautiful in noon's
Illuminating light!

Each head was bared, each small right hand
Was reverently raised, —
And while upon the emblem which
O'ershadowed them, they gazed,

Their voices blended in a vow
  To guard their country's good;
An infant vow of loyalty,
  Allegiance, gratitude.

And we, who looked and listened, felt
  Within our hearts a sense
Of newly-waked devotion,
  And of deeper reverence.

A something in those childish tones
  Stirring the quiet air, —
Which thrilled one like a touch divine,
  Like sacrament, or prayer.

And memories of other scenes,
  Too sacred to forget,
Came with a rush of tenderness
  That filled the heart, — but yet,

We felt no sweeter vow could be,
  No purer from above,
Than that which infant lips pronounced
  Of loyalty and love!

FAR AWAY.

FAR away! — But earthly distance,
Sweep of land, and sweep of sea,
Cannot with their blended forces
Keep my *thought* from thee!

What is distance, as we measure?
What is time, and what is place?
When the spirit moves unswerving,
Unrestrained, through space?

Far away? — The words I utter,
But I heed not their decree!
What so animate as spirit?
Or as thought so free?

A SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON.

OUR pathway leads us to a little lake,
As "placid" as Lake Leman, and as "clear!"
With bowered banks, and fragrant pine-trees near.
Here we draw rein! — Distinct reflections make
A double picture; the still waters take
The blue sky to themselves, which doth appear
More lovely mixed with silver. Far and near
A silence — that no faintest echoes break —
Pervades the air, and in the heart doth fall
Like a divine impulsion; golden haze
— With beauty and with charm ineffable —
Illumines like a halo! It is all
Too sweet for sadness, — yet these perfect days
Bring us the message of their own farewell!

A YEAR.

A YEAR of seasons and of days!
Of mornings with their golden haze,
Of noon's illuminating rays,
Of evening quietudes!
A year like Nature's other years,
In form and sequence it appears,
With its commingling of tears,
And smiles, and varying moods.

Like Nature's other years,— but yet,
Deep in my inmost heart are set
Impressions I can ne'er forget,
Which make it different.
One is a shadow, like the night,
And one above it hovers bright,
A halo of divinest light,
Of heaven-born intent!

And when in thought I live again
The moments of the shadow's reign, —
There ever comes to soften pain,
This holy benison.
It comes like a descending dove,
Bringing a message from above,
Under whose influence of love
I feel — "Thy will be done."

It breathes a blessedness and calm
That silences my heart's alarm;
It fills my spirit with the balm
Of the still words it saith.
So, by the shadow's mystery,
A glory is revealed to me,
Till then, I could not truly see, —
The radiant angel, Faith!

MY DAY-DREAM.

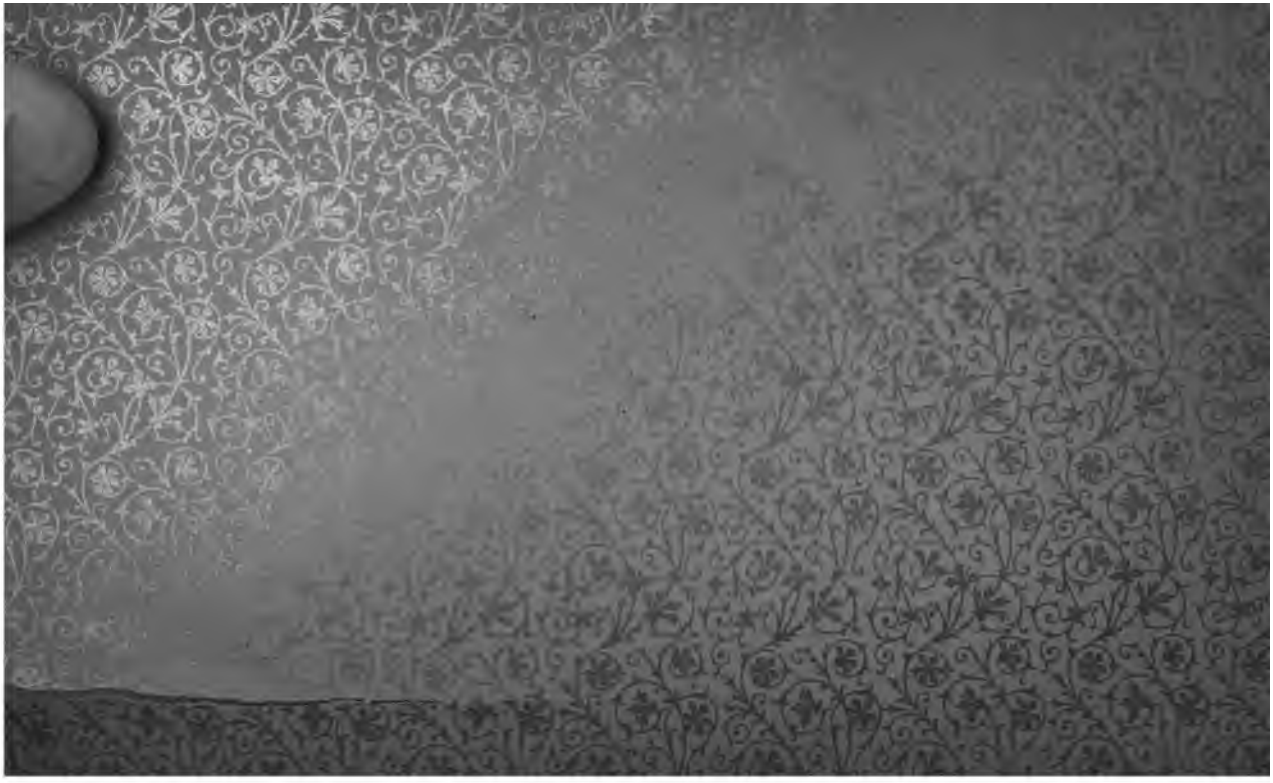
I HAVE a dream, — a pleasant dream, —
A day-dream that I cherish!
A living thing within my heart,
Whatever else may perish.

Whatever else may turn aside,
Or in allegiance falter,
My spirit's guest in faithfulness,
Nor time, nor chance, can alter.

It comes to me when shadows drift
Across my day's completeness.
It brings a sunlight of its own,
That fills me with its sweetness.

If one should question, "Which is more
Like truth — life as we make it,
Or this thy dream?" — I could affirm, —
"The *dream* is, as I take it."

And so — what matters it, though stars
  Grow dim, or flowers perish, —
If I but hold my pleasant dream,
  My day-dream that I cherish?



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